

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Joachim Adis, ed., Amazonian Arachnida and Myriapoda*

Pensoft Publishers, hardcover, 590 pages, 6 color plates. ISBN 9546421189, € 78.00, Sofia, Bulgaria, 2002  
(www.pensoft.net)

The Amazon basin has always been regarded as a nearly impenetrable place – perhaps even more to taxonomists than to other kinds of explorers. *Amazonian Arachnida and Myriapoda*, led and edited by long-time Amazonian researcher Joachim Adis, rolls back that veil of ignorance on a huge group of Amazonian animals.

At nearly 600 pages, the book is large, although no doubt not large enough to do justice to the size of its subject (Amazonia as defined by Ab'Saber in 1977). However, the keys will work over a much larger region, guaranteeing an even larger audience. The authors are generally recognized world specialists. Chapters cover oribatid mites (at 272 pages just over half the book) by S. Woas, Amblypygi by P. Weygoldt, Araneae by A.D. Brescovit, A.B. Bonaldo, R. Bertani, and C.A. Rheims, Opiliones by A.B. Kury and R. Pinto-da-Rocha, Palpigradi by B. Condé and J. Adis, Pseudoscorpiones by V. Mahnert and J. Adis, Ricinulei by N.I. Platnick, Schizomida by J.R. Reddell and J.C. Cokendolpher, Scorpiones by W.R. Lourenço, Solifugae by L.S. Rocha, Uropygi by J.M. Rowland and J. Adis, Geophilomorpha by D. Foddai, A. Minelli, and L.A. Pereira, Lithobiomorpha by D. Foddai, A.A. Schileyko, and A. Minelli, Scolopendromorpha by A.A. Schileyko, Scutigromorpha by D. Foddai, A. Minelli, M. Würmli, and J. Adis, Diplopoda by R.L. Hoffman, S.I. Golovatch, J. Adis, and J.W. de Morais, Pauropoda by U. Scheller, and Symphyla by U. Scheller and J. Adis.

Besides co-authoring six of the taxonomic chapters and editing the volume, Joachim Adis also wrote three introductory chapters, keys to arachnid orders and myriapod classes, and a concluding chapter on sampling techniques. His involvement throughout the book reflects his decades-long and all-pervasive influence on Amazonian research in general – ever-present at meetings to encourage and cajole basic studies of Amazonian invertebrate diversity and ecology, and always eager to lend a helping hand to over-committed taxonomists or beginning students. In addition, the collections made over decades at 12 sites around Manaus provided many of the specimens treated in these chapters.

The bulk of the book (94%) is devoted to overviews of the diversity and biology of, and keys to, arachnid orders and

myriapod classes. Chapters on relatively less-diverse groups such as Amblypygi, Ricinulei, Palpigradi, Schizomida, Scorpiones, Uropygi, and Lithobiomorpha treat, or attempt to treat, Amazonian diversity at the species level. The chapter on scorpions by Wilson Lourenço is particularly good. It seems difficult to believe that only two species of lithobiomorph and one palpigrade inhabit Amazonia, but Adis and colleagues have made extensive litter collections so the mystery is not just lack of collecting effort. The chapters on larger groups such as Araneae, Opiliones, Pseudoscorpions, Solifugae (two Amazonian species known), and Diplopoda treat Amazonian diversity at the family and/or subfamily level. Geophilomorphs, scolopendromorphs, pauropods, and symphylans are keyed to genus. Most chapters mention all known species or give checklists of Amazonian species, as well as succinct summaries of biology, distribution, methods of study, identification, and the literature.

As is often the case, mites get short shrift. Only oribatids are covered, and this chapter would have benefited from sterner editing. Rather than being a user-friendly guide to help non-specialists to identify oribatids, it is mostly a specialist argument about oribatid systematics in general, with taxonomic notes on various groups, some of which occur in Amazonia. Although 87 multipart figures are provided, most carry vague legends such as “scheme of lateral aspect of lamellobatid genera.” Since Lamellobatidae does not appear in the chapter table of contents (which mostly lists supra-familial groupings) nor in the general index, the non-specialist must flip pages to find the lost Lamellobatidae. Unlike the uniformly professional figures elsewhere in the volume, the mite drawings seem to have been printed without reduction – larger than necessary given their detail and with too obvious imperfections. Concrete taxonomic information occurs in boxes throughout the text, which collectively contain many generic names, but the reader too rarely learns explicitly whether such taxa occur in Amazonia or not. Perhaps the best place to start with this chapter is the appendix, which lists some 260 species and genera sampled from the environs of Manaus. Even here, though, things are

opaque. The parenthetical numbers following taxon names are not figures or even page numbers, alas, but locality codes. To find out whether these known Amazonian taxa are discussed in the text, the reader will have to make a concordance. The author does mention briefly nearly 700 pages of Neotropical oribatid taxonomy by Balogh and Balogh; perhaps these two works in tandem make sense.

In general the book is well produced, and, at €78.00, remarkably cheap for a volume of this size (at [www.pensoft.net](http://www.pensoft.net), although [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), for some reason, prices it at US\$149.5). A very fine feature are the six color plates (50 figures total) showing a diversity of Amazonian arachnids and myriapods, habitats, and collecting equipment

setups. Copy editing is less consistent than one might expect from a professional press, and the reproduction method occasionally causes the thin fonts or fine lines in drawings to break up.

These minor complaints should not detract from this excellent, even historic, volume. This book is in for severe use in all labs that need to sort and identify Neotropical arachnids and myriapods.

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